



The State of New Hampshire
Department of Environmental Services



Clark B. Freise, Assistant Commissioner

February 1, 2017

The Honorable Gene Chandler
Chairman, House Public Works and Highways
Legislative Office Building, Room 201
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

Re: House Bill 563 - An Act making an appropriation for the Carroll and Strafford counties freight rail improvements project and making an appropriation for the Coos county freight rail improvements project.

Dear Chairman Chandler and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on House Bill 563, relative to freight rail improvements. The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) does not take a position regarding the appropriation, but provides the following information in support of freight movement by rail within and through the state.

Emissions from on-road vehicles, including heavy-duty trucks used to move freight within and through the state, account for the majority of air pollution emitted in New Hampshire. This pollution, including particulate emissions and ground level ozone, which is the prime ingredient in smog, contribute to poor visibility in some of New Hampshire's most scenic areas and compromise our air quality in the summer months.

The 2012 New Hampshire State Rail Plan¹ notes that 7.3 percent (4.7 million tons per year) of all freight in the state is moved by rail. While this percentage is below the national average, it is still significant and "equates to more than 188,000 trucks that would travel on the state's highways if not for rail." Keeping those trucks off the state's highways improves travel flow, reduces wear and tear on our highways and bridges, and improves air quality.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on HB 563. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact either Craig Wright, Director of the Air Resources Division (craig.wright@des.nh.gov, 271-1088) or Rebecca Ohler, Administrator, Technical Services Bureau (rebecca.ohler@des.nh.gov, 271-6749).

Sincerely,

Clark B. Freise
Assistant Commissioner

cc: Sponsors of HB 563: Representatives J. Graham, Cloutier, McConkey

¹ <https://www.nh.gov/dot/org/aerorailtransit/railandtransit/documents/FinalStateRailPlan.pdf>